

Testimony

House Appropriations Committee

November 13, 2013

Dear Chairman Haveman and Members of the Committee,

Crime Stoppers of Michigan is a 501 C 3 organization and is the largest crime fighting organization in the world, operating in 22 countries and currently has a significant presence within Michigan, including seven counties of Southeast Michigan as well as Detroit. We are in discussions with Flint to also include that city. With me is Willie Burton who is the Project Manager of Safe Campus housed within Crime Stoppers.

Our mission is to empower people to make their neighborhoods, schools and businesses safe through the anonymous reporting of crime. We are opposed to SB 374 for the following reasons:

- a) It duplicates what Crime Stoppers and Silent Observer are presently doing in the schools.
- b) Having two 800 numbers in a school both asking students to report threats, crimes and code of conduct issues will lead to confusion and damage Crime Stoppers.
- c) We don't believe that students, particularly urban students, will call the state police nor will they believe that the call is confidential. Over 50% of people that we survey still are skeptical that Crime Stoppers is anonymous.
- d) Crime Stoppers and Silent Observer have worked for years to gain the trust of students.
- e) The Crime Stoppers brand stands for anonymous. That is what we do.
- f) We pay rewards anonymously.
- g) We are in the process of giving greater responsibility for the programs in the schools to the student councils. We then match what is paid to tipsters to the student councils in the respective schools.

- h) Crime Stoppers of Michigan has the staff (nine full time and 4 part time employees) that can make things happen in the schools.
- i) Between Crime Stoppers of Michigan and the other Crime Stoppers/Silent Observer programs we already cover S.E. Michigan including Detroit, Grand Rapids and Kent County, Lansing, Kalamazoo, Traverse City, Flint, Saginaw, Bay Counties and almost all counties north of Bay County in the lower peninsula and Sault St. Marie. There is little population left that is not covered.
- j) We have over 90% of all of the law enforcement agencies that operate in Southeast Michigan as our members who pay annual dues. We have a great working relationship with all police departments in our region.
- k) We have already received tips that have prevented suicides, resulted in lock downs of schools due to real threats and forwarded numerous tips that have resulted in taking away weapons. That is what we do.

Crime Stoppers is here to recommend that revisions be made to this legislation to include a public private partnership between the Attorney General's office and Crime Stoppers. We believe that Crime Stoppers & Silent Observer's should promote the program, take all calls, pay rewards and guarantee that all tips remain anonymous. We can perform this essential service for the state for much less than the proposed \$3.5 million, saving the taxpayers of this state money and another level of bureaucracy. We are open to oversight by the Attorney General's office.

We believe that this is the best way to protect our children and our schools.

# STUDENT CRIME STOPPERS

**Thomas Matuszewski**

**President - Michigan Crime Stoppers Council**

**President - Bay County Crime Stoppers**

The reason I am so actively involved with the Crime Stopper program is because of the Student Crime Stoppers component. As a school principal of thirty-seven years in both mid and lower Michigan, I know the advantages of having a program available to students where they could anonymously report activities and incidents within the school, or even the community, where they could do so in an anonymously means. We as educators know too well that even the top ten students walking the halls, your valedictorian, salutatorian and others all know who the offenders are, but choose to remain silent and not get involved. The same fear of being identified as the informant exists within our communities. With Michigan having four of the top ten crime cities in the entire nation, every effort to stop crime has to take place. I personally believe that every effort that works needs to be given funding and consideration if we are going to make a dent in solving crime. Hiring more police officers alone is not the formula of success. We know that most people, will NOT call "911" or the police department because they do not want to have to appear in court or worse yet, have to look over their shoulders for the rest of their lives. We had a night club in Saginaw, (Buena Vista to be exact), last year where there were about 100 people standing in line outside waiting to get in and four people were shot in the parking lot,

and when law enforcement arrived, nobody saw what happened.

For the same reason, students will not step up.

Bullying happens on the school buses every day, it happens on the internet (especially on weekends), and in the restrooms and on playgrounds, and at after school events at schools. Kids just don't want to deal with the consequences of "telling."

The Student Crime Stoppers program gives students the opportunity to call a SAFE, proven safe, anonymous tip line to report such crimes. We tell students the calls are not traced (no caller ID), we do not ask names, we cannot call you back, and nobody will know you called (unless of course you go around telling everybody you called Crime Stoppers).

Getting into the schools to train students is a means of giving students a trump card which is actually a life skill. If we can get into the heads of every student before they graduate from high school, so they now that Crime Stoppers is truly a safe, anonymous means to report a wrong-dong, how wonderful this world could be. We encourage them to log our hot line in their cell phones so they have it at their finger tips.

I have personally introduced the "Student Crime Stoppers" program into every high school and middle school in Bay County.. I return every couple of years to re-introduce the program so most middle school and high school students will see it at least twice before they graduate. When I visit with juniors and seniors, I bring a uniformed law enforcement person with me to speak about how our program assists law enforcement. They also take a few minutes to educate students

about laws regarding alcohol and cell phone use when driving. I might mention that I have met with school officials in both Freeland (Saginaw County) and Alpena (Alpena County) within the last two months to present the program and will be introducing the program to students prior to the end of the present school year.

The program promotes and encourages young people to make the call if they have information that makes their school unsafe. It teaches them to make the right decision and to not stand back or to look the other way.

The program within the school is student operated. A board of directors composed of students is appointed to market and advertise the program within the school. The members of the student board never know who the victim is, who the witnesses are, or suspects regarding a tip that is submitted. These identities are protected by the school liaison affiliated with the program. Each school is encouraged to tailor the program to meet its specific needs. Logos, mottos, flyers, by-laws and other aspects of the program may be constructed to fit each institution. The students are challenged to be creative in developing the program. Some schools have implemented billboards, poster contests, video re-enactments, etc. to get the word out regarding the program.

To organize a student crime stoppers program within a school, the board of education of the school district has to approve the implementation of the program. Members of the local Crime Stoppers board of directors and/or the local crime stoppers coordinator then can meet with the high school principal (or his/her designee) and a staff member who is willing to take on

the responsibility of coordinating the program within the school. The staff member then appoints students to the student board, adopts the by-laws to meet the school's needs and designs a tip pay out program. The group then decides how they will get information out to students as to how the program works. In working with the local Crime Stoppers program, decisions and recommendations can be discussed as to how the program will be financed, who will be responsible for tip pay outs, and if any fundraising projects will be conducted, how will they be done and who will do it.

Pay outs for tips within the school can range from \$50.00 up to \$1,000.00. Tip decisions within the school for internal offenses usually do not exceed a payout of more than \$300.00. A tip which may be felony related would fall under the guidelines of Crime Stoppers with a tip of up to \$1,000.00 being paid.

Only about six percent of the students ever collect rewards issued to them (94% never call back), while outside crime prevention programs report that about 84% actually call back to collect a reward. These statistics reveal that the motivating force for students to report a tip is rarely for the money. Students simply want offenders stopped, their school to be safe and their identity to not be made known and they not be labeled as the one who "snitched." Remaining anonymous is the key!

The Student Crime Stoppers program promotes school spirit, pride and responsibility. It allows students to take action against victimization and crime, and it protects the anonymity of those who choose to come forth anonymously with information needed to eliminate crime.

The Michigan State Police also operates a hotline for reporting incidents of school violence. The phone number for this hotline is 1-800-815-TIPS. The Michigan State Police will not pay directly for tips made to their hotline, you must contact Crime Stoppers first at 1-800-422-JAIL.

With Michigan having four of the top crime cities in the entire nation in our state, something has got to be done, and focusing in on an effort to teach our youth through the schools is an excellent means to an excellent effort to get the criminals off the streets.

Crime Stoppers is accomplishing this effort with almost no money and volunteer staffing from their board members. The state is proposing to conduct a similar approach with proposed significant funding. It would be great if somehow those behind the state effort and Crime Stoppers could work together to make this happen quicker and more efficiently state-wide. versus confusing the general [public and students within the schools with multiple messages from different sources

I commend the attorney general for his concern about a program to help address the same issue we have been and continue to address. It would be great if somehow those behind the state effort and Crime Stoppers could work together to make this happen quicker and more efficiently state-wide. versus confusing the general public and students within the schools with multiple messages from different sources.

There are Programs similar to Crime Stoppers such as "safe2tell", a program started by Susan Payne, a former Crime Stoppers Law Enforcement liaison from Colorado Springs, Colorado. In speaking with Judge Richard Carter, the Executive Director of Crime Stoppers USA, the Colorado program is doing quite well and has tremendous financial support. The fact that the executive director, the former Crime Stoppers law enforcement liaison , was placed on the attorney general's

crime task force for schools, and eventually was asked by President Obama to be on his school task force for safety in schools as well, has helped promote the program in the public eye. The perception there by many is that the Crime Stoppers program and the "safe2tell" program are competing. She has been to the White House on two separate occasions in recent years to speak on school safety and her "safe2tell" program.

Crime Stoppers wants more than anything to have our schools become safer than what they are. Having an effective, safe tool for students to use to report crime is a necessity. Promoting such a program is a must because our children are our future and they need to learn the reality of "civic responsibility."

It is my sincere hope that somehow the energy being exerted by these two driving forces to combat crime in the schools and in the community can work together in this important effort.

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*Tom is a retired school principal who has been presenting the Student Crime Stoppers program in schools throughout Bay County for the past nine years.*

*Tom is also a proponent of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program and he had the program in his district in Bay City up until his retirement and he also introduced the D.A.R.E. program to schools in both Tuscola and Branch Counties.*